

Griffith Park Advisory Board
Final December, 2021 minutes
12/2/21
6:31pm, via Zoom

Rollcall

Greenwald, Crammes, Laib, Phillips, Thornton, Deutsch (from Corfu!), Gilbert, Chung
Ashouri joined at 6:40pm

Announcements by Chair

Stefanie Smith has been appointed Superintendent of Griffith Park; acting has been removed from title. Applause from board.

Approval of Minutes

Phillips first, Thornton second. 7 aye, 1 abstention

Presentation by Government Officials

Rotolo, CD4

-Vaccinations now available to 5 year olds and above. City is encouraging vaccinations as the best way to manage covid.

-Upcoming blood drive at Friendship Hall

-Greek Theatre and CD4 are having a donation drive at Franklins Cafe 12/4-12/19 for drop offs. New socks, clothes and hygiene products are most needed and encouraged.

-The Mulholland Highway fencing meeting held on 11/18 was well attended. The final community meeting is on 12/4 10:30am, via zoom. Information on CD4 website

-LA Shares has had several destructive fires. It has been deemed a problematic site and will be demolished. RAP has identified a contractor and work will begin soon, pending The Gas Co turning off gas supply.

Board Questions

-Thornton re blood drive clarification

-Laib re future use of Shares site. Rotolo: Councilperson is aware that the site has been identified as a future home of the Griffith Park Adult Community Center.

-Deutsch: Lake Hollywood park/fencing meeting next steps after upcoming meeting? Rotolo: There will be a third info-gathering step with a broad survey. By 12/31, the process should be closed and perhaps a result will be announced in February.

Ranger Daniel Brewster

Rangers are certified wildlife rescuers, interpretive guides, sworn peace officers. Current crimes in park include numerous leash law violations, smoking and drinking violations. Our first approach is education of violator. Repeat violators are ticketed. Leash law tickets are most reoccurring problem. There have also been 60 calls re smoking year to date. 166 fire responses year to date, including illegal/legal bbq complaints. 26 year-to-date burglary from motor vehicles, calls re protests at the Pony Ride, including several trespassing arrests there. The protestors have been there every weekend for several months. There was a recent call for shots fired in Riverside Canyon; it turned out to be a paint gun. Brewster is transferring to the Harbor Division.

Board and guest Questions

Rotolo: More information requested re the Pony Ride arrests

Phillips: When should the public call? Brewster: Every time anyone sees something suspicious.

Superintendent Smith: Thanks Ranger Brewster for his outreach and great attitude. Board applause.

Chip Clements: Should you have had a firearm for the shots fired response? Brewster: “yes”; clarified his personal position that peace officers should carry guns, that he personally has had to arrest numerous criminals in city parks who had firearms, while he didn’t.

General Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda

Michael Schneider: Restated his interest in being on GPAB board and that he supports the transportation concepts on Riverside Drive. Greenwald: Contact Tracy James to apply for board membership

Gerry Hans: FOGP will be making a push for reducing unnecessary lighting in the park. “Light pollution has an adverse impact on wildlife”. the most egregious offender are the lights at the Mt. Lee utility site. “The intensity of the lighting is harmful and pointed downward, directly into Park.

Julie Coffey: She is “excited by the ecologist position”.

Presentations

The Riverside Drive Transportation Corridor plan

Eberle, DOT planner

This project has been stimulated by Street Services planned Riverside Dr resurfacing in 2022; it is an opportunity to make improvements and improve multiple mobility methods and rebalance priorities. Riverside Dr is a gateway transportation corridor to open-space recreation in Griffith Park, the LA River, Elysian Park and it currently has a gap in strategic bicycle transportation.

There are three concepts proposed, with reconfigured driving lanes, parking and dedicated/protected bicycle lanes. Potential downsides may be a reduction in parking, reduced vehicle speed, and increased travel times.

The DOT is currently in the community outreach stage. Public comment available at LAlivablestreets.org.

Board Comment

Phillips: Close proximity of bike lanes and opening car doors is problematic

Laib: Need for a dedicated left hand turn lane from northbound Riverside to west bound Los Feliz BI

Ashouri: Desires board supports basic premise of the project, with emphasis of protected bike lane and a left hand turn signal for Riverside to westbound Los Feliz BI

Thornton: Bicycles need to be separated from traffic and pedestrians; appreciates the separated bike lanes. Supports more visitors to park via bicycles and other non automobile methods

Greenwald: The big picture is that this is a strategic public transportation project.

Chung: Question re street parking and large parking lots at tennis courts and soccer field

Public Comment

Norman Sands: Gm of Taylor Architectural Products on Riverside at Glendale BI; many of the businesses don’t have enough parking. Would like additional street parking and bike lanes and an improved crosswalk at this intersection.

Marian Dodge: Why wasn’t the Sunset BI model utilized, which would avoid the proximity of cars and bikes? Eberle: That concept would require bicycle signaling, for which there is no financing, and the Sunset project has both bike lanes on one side of the street.

Terrance Houston: Supports option that reduces “travel lanes”.

Gerry Hans: Not a fan of sharrow lanes unless speed is greatly reduced, and option 3 is best.

Stephanie Vendig: Construction on west side of Riverside Dr and proliferation of events at various south park venues require better pedestrian protections.

Sarah Rodgers: Option 3 is best for cyclists.

Griffith Observatory Parking Review

Superintendent Stefanie Smith

The \$15/hour parking rate at and around Griffith Observatory has been reduced to \$10/hour.

The urban ecologist position has been approved from these funds. Currently, the fiscal year ’21/22 projected parking revenue is \$5M. The RAP general fund draw is \$2.7m, with the

remaining \$2.3M being allocated to the park, as follows: transportation (700k), capital improvements (600k), staff support (800k), deferred maintenance and equipment (200k). The '22/'23 Griffith Observatory parking revenue is expected to be \$5.4m. The RAP general fund allocation will be reduced to \$2.2M, with the remaining 3.2M allocated to Griffith Park. GPAB will help her prioritize capital expenditures/improvements in Griffith Park going forward.

Board comments

Phillips: How do we prioritize GPAB suggested projects going forward? Smith: I will be the party prioritizing

Deutsch: How was allocation figure reached? Originally, it was supposed to be 100% allocation to Griffith Park. Smith: She is working on the allocation formulas. The "department CFO made the allocation decisions".

Thornton: We need to increase allocation back to Griffith Park.

Crames: This was originally sold to the community with the proceeds staying in Griffith Park. The funds should continue to be allocated as such. Smith: You have my commitment to reduce allocation to the general fund.

Public Comment

Gerry Hans: Disappointed that more isn't being directed back into GP. FOGP will be addressing this independently.

Julie Coffey: Great that we are hiring an ecologist. Will this salary be permanently funded by the parking revenues? Smith: Yes, for now as a contract employee, until a civil service position is approved. That process takes years.

Thornton: What can we do to support that process (civil service position approval); Smith: I will reach out when I need support.

Greenwald: We appreciate you and Matt Rudnick working with us on this. Our letters indicate our desire to use this funds to support this park. Understand that the department circumstances changed somewhat during covid.

Crames: We'd like a statement from GP management about intentions going forward, so we can put that out via our community engagement ad hoc committee.

Laib: These funds really need a strong allocation to getting the park line shuttle and other park public transportation funded and prioritized.

Superintendent Updates

Superintendent Smith

- All RAP facilities require proof of vaccination to enter.
- RAP staffing now has a required full vaccination status.
- Old Zoo fencing bids are coming in and that should be completed early in this next year.
- Pony Ride protests are going to result in an independent veterinarian assessment of the ponies welfare.
- Ferraro Field lighting issue has been repaired and lighting enhanced.

Board Comment

Deutsch: Revenue from parking was meant to stay in the park and the hiring of a biologist is a really good step.

Committee Reports

Executive

Greenwald: Addressed that the committee system, including two newest committees, is enough for now.

Engagement

Crames: Lots of excitement from the 125 year anniversary; the zoo drive exit is a challenge.

Safety

Laib: We have identified a potential funder for the LAFD 'no smoking signs' and should have more info for January meeting; Still considering motorized vehicles on park paved fire roads. Anxious for the department's review, currently underway.

Public Comment

Gerry Hans: Motorized vehicles represent a major speed differential on these road trails, creating a safety hazard

Equestrian

Thornton: Locating mounting blocks in several locations. Dedication of blocks is anticipated to be in middle of January, near first year anniversary of Lynne Browns passing.

Zoo

Greenwald: Another conversation with the ED of the Zoo has led to an open communication line with lead EIR staffer, Carol Armstrong, formerly of the Mayor's office. Armstrong has been receptive to our board's perspective, particularly off site parking and shuttling. Greenwald points out GPAB's support for alternative 2, reiterates that Zoo transportation accountability is key, that the addition of almost 2m new visitors needs to be mitigated. The EIR is not yet moving to City Council. Committee member Deutsch adds that the committee is looking to draft a statement of principles, as to our objectives, and report back to the board.

Board Comments

Ashouri: Feels the board should readdress this issue and revisit prioritizing ecological issues.
Greenwald: The original board direction, reflecting practical considerations, was to focus less on the internal Zoo modifications and more on the impact this project will have on greater Griffith Park.

Crames: Thanks to Greenwald for carving a space for our participation in this.

Laib: Does the department have any role in this? Smith: Yes, at the department executive level.

Public Comment

Gerry Hans: Alt 1 and 2 support a lot of the shared desires of many groups. FOGP chose Alt 1 because less attendance will have less impact on the park.

Transit and Mobility

Deutsch: Our strategic transportation issues depend a great deal on the outcome of the Zoo EIR. He will call a full committee meeting next year.

Sustainability

Phillips: First meeting was about water filling stations at existing water fountains. Fern Dell may be initial location for these.

Board Business

Thornton: Need an updated chair and committee roster

Crames: Fire prevention and fire dept representative should be on next agenda. Laib: He will invite Deputy Fire Chief Hogan

Next meeting is January 27, 2022 at 6:30pm via Zoom

Motion to adjourn

Crames, first; Phillips, second. Unanimous. Meeting is adjourned at 9:12pm